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AND OTHER POEMS
BY WILLIAM WATSON

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NOTE

THE contents of this volume now make their appearance for the first time, with the exception of six short pieces. Of these, two have been published in the *Nation*, two in the *Evening News*, one in *Nature*, one in the *Cornhill Magazine*. The author tenders his thanks to the editors of those journals and periodicals for permission to reprint the poems referred to.

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I

POEMS OF THE LITERARY LIFE

RETROGRESSION

OUR daughters flower in vernal grace ;
In strength our striplings wax apace ;
Our cities teem ; our commerce rides
Sovereign upon the fawning tides.
But while, to this our stronghold—where
The North Wind's wandering children fair,
Like wild birds from the waters sprung,
Built their wild nest and reared their young—
The fleets of peace for ever pour
Fruitage and vintage, gems and ore ;
While here, within each ocean gate,
Long barricadoed against Fate,
We are served by all the alien seas,
And fed from the Antipodes,

Lo, everywhere the unplenished brain!
Everywhere, dire as bondman's chain,
Or laws that crush, or creeds that blind,
The leanness of the unnourished mind.

For few and fewer do they grow,
Who know, or ever cared to know,
The great things greatly said and sung
In this heroic English tongue,
This craggy speech, the rough-wrought key
To palaces of wizardry,
Our fathers' glory, and our despair;
And many a fabric hung in air,
That firmer stands than boastful stone;
And many a tower of vigil lone,
Whence Wisdom sees, beneath her curled,
The involved, inextricable world.

And shouldst thou have in thee to-day
Aught thou canst better sing than say,
Shun, if thou wouldst by men be heard,
The comely phrase, the wellborn word,
And use, as for their ears more meet,
The loose-lipped lingo of the street,
A language Milton's kin have long
Accounted good enough for song.
Or don that vesture not less vile,
The beaded and bespangled style—
Diction o'erloaded and impure,
Thy thought lost in its garniture,
Till this itself becomes the goal,
The alpha, omega, and whole;
Thy Muse, ev'n to her raiment's hem,
Huddling uncostly gem on gem,
Striving her lax form to bestar

With all crude ornaments that are ;
An empty and a dreary strife,
Vulgar in Letters as in Life.

Nor look for praise, save here and there
'From a fast-dwindling remnant rare,
If thou beget with happy pain
The ordered and the governed strain
That peradventure had not shamed
Masters felicitously famed ;
Dryden, the athlete large and strong,
Lord of the nerve and sinew of song ;
The easeful victor, who subdued
Till conquest was but habitude ;
A hewer and shaper who could see
In adamant plasticity ;
Who tore from the entrails of the mine

The metal of his iron line—
Iron that oft all molten rolled,
Heaved to a billow, and crashed to gold ;
Who, born beside the haughty tomb
Of that rank time of overbloom
When poets vied in gathering each
Full-bosomed apple and buxom peach
That odorous in the orchard burned,
Had, from their purple surfeit, learned
The truth in Hellas seen so plain,
That the art of arts is to refrain ;—
Or Gray, who on worn thoughts conferred
That second youth, the perfect word,
The elected and predestined phrase
That had lain bound, long nights and days,
To wear at last, when once set free,
Immortal pellucidity ;

And who, in that most mighty Ode,
That like a pageant streamed and glowed,
Called up anew mid breathing things
The great ghosts of our tragic Kings,
With doom-dark brows to come and go,
Trailing the folds of gorgeous woe.

THE MOSSGROWN PORCHES

When, as of old in Rome's imperial world,
Fair, conquered gods are from their temples hurled,
And some rude, vehement Peter puts to flight
Some serene Phœbus, lord of lore and light;
In wastes and wilds, by fount and caverned hill,
Secretly, furtively, are worshipped still,
With the sad zeal of vainly pious knees,
The ancient, the deposed divinities,
Heaven's outcasts, the great exiles of the sky,
Once mighty to do all things, save to die.

So, though in kingdoms of the Lyre to-day
I see the new faiths push the old away—

See the hot hierophants of each strange shrine
Offer oblation to all gods but mine,
And proudliest build their sanctuary and home
Where broods, on England's Tiber, England's
Rome;
Yet, mid a revel of change, unchanged I turn
To the lorn haunts where older altars burn,—
There seek, companioned by the lessening few
Whose faith is as mine own, the gods I knew;
Seek in deep clefts, and hushed in forests find,
The far-withdrawn Olympians of the mind,
Nor ever doubt, that among wondering men
These deathless will in triumph come again,
As sure as the droop'd year's remounting curve,
And reign anew, when I no more shall serve.

THE SEXES OF SONG

FIRST in the empire of the Muse
Are the broad athletes, the all-male;
Who from their cradles had the thews
That unwithstandably prevail.

But many a province she possesses,
Rich in fair manors and proud seats,
Bestowed on such great poetesses
As Shelley and June-hearted Keats.

THE HUSBANDMAN OF HEAVEN

[Lines written near the burial-place of Burns]

POET, whose very dust, here shed,
Is as the quick among the dead,
Where revels thy carousing soul?
What Hebe fills what mighty bowl,
Mantling with what immortal drink?

* * * * *

Nay, great and blissful one! I think
That, taught by Time himself to flee
The taverns of Eternity,
Amid yon constellations thou
Drivest all night the heavenly Plough,
Wooing with song some sky-nymph fair
Who sits in Cassiopeia's Chair,

Or half unravels on her knees
That tangled net, the Pleiades,
Or, at thy over amorous strain
Bridling with wrath she needs must feign,
Flits to a region pale and gray,
Shimmers through nebula away,
Coldly beyond thy fires to roam,
Hid in Orion's astral foam,
But wandering back, with starlike tears
Yields to the Ploughman of the Spheres.

SHAKESPEARE

O LET me leave the plains behind,
And let me leave the vales below!
Into the highlands of the mind,
Into the mountains let me go.

My Keats, my Spenser, loved I well;
Gardens and statued lawns were these;
Yet not for ever could I dwell
In arbours and in pleasances.

Here are the heights, crest beyond crest,
With Himalayan dews impearled;
And I will watch from Everest
The long heave of the surging world.

SHE guards, not binds; coerces not, but shields;
And o'er this proud though little land of Me,
Not an immediate governance she wields,
But a Protectorate and a Suzerainty.

Within her ambience, fetterless I dwell,
Under the still monition of her eye.
Not my custodian she, but sentinel,
And less a bound or barrier than a sky.

Therefore I keep, or strive to keep, her law,
While some break from her with insurgence rude;
And as for these, when I looked forth and saw
Their liberty, then chose I servitude.

NATURE'S WAY

"FAULTILY faultless" may be ill—
"Carefully careless" is worse still.
I bought one day a book of rhyme—
One long, fierce flout at tune and time;
Ragged and jagged by intent,
As if each line were earthquake-rent;
Leagues on seismal leagues of it,
Not unheroically writ,
By one of whom I had been told
That he, in scorn of canons old,
Pedantic laws effete and dead,
Went fearless to the pure well-head
Of song's most ancient legislature—
Art's uncorrupted mother, Nature.

Nature! whose lapidary seas
Labour a pebble without ease,
Till they unto perfection bring
That miracle of polishing;
Who never negligently yet
Fashioned an April violet,
Nor would forgive, did June disclose
Unceremoniously the rose;
Who makes the toadstool in the grass
The carven ivory surpass,
So guiltless of a fault or slip
Is its victorious workmanship;
Who suffers us pure Form to see
In a dead leaf's anatomy;
And pondering long where greenly sleep
The unravished secrets of the deep,
Bids the all-courted pearl express

Her final thoughts on flawlessness;
But visibly aches when doomed to bring
Some inchoate amorphous thing,
Loathed by its very mother for
The unfinish she doth most abhor,
Into a world her curious wit
Would fain have shaped all-exquisite
As the acorn cup's simplicity,
Or the Moon's patience with the sea,
Or the superb, the golden grief
Of each October for each leaf,
Phrased in a rhetoric that excels
Isaiah's and Ezekiel's.

ON A CAROLINE POET

THIS lord of a romantic wit
Was subtle without knowing it;
For Subtlety expires in air
If of herself she grow aware.

Oft with a reveller's gait did he
Stagger into profundity;
As mariners that chartless rove
May drift on isles of treasure-trove.

ART'S RIDDLE

Go to ; I also would her skein unravel.
Art is not Nature warped in man's control,
But Nature's reminiscences of travel
Across an artist's soul.

Or 'tis a tidal river, that, each day,
Ebbing and flowing under cliff and tree,
With mutual and eternal interplay
Takes and gives back the sea.

TO A STRENUOUS CRITIC

You scorn as idle—you who praise
  Each posturing hero of the herd—
The lofty bearing of a phrase,
  The noble countenance of a word.

"This has no import for the age!"
  And so your votive wreaths you heap
On him who brought unto our Stage
  A mightier dulness o'er the deep.

Great Heaven! When these with clamour shrill
  Drift out to Lethe's harbour bar,
A verse of Lovelace shall be still
  As vivid as a pulsing star.

TO ——

At first I almost thought that your fine gift,
Your noble genius for depreciation,
Had given a happy and a timely lift
To poor old Shakespeare's tottering reputation.

But much I doubt, reading once more his page,
Whether such proud advertisement it needed!
No,—'twill be sweet when you have reached a stage
By ripeness oft preceded.

TO A LITERARY CLERIC

I WOULD not have you scorn archdeaconships,
Or comfortable deaneries refuse;
Yet should I mourn, did these things quite eclipse
Your mild and worthy Muse.

Nor shall I watch incurious your career;
For though your heart on things above be set,
You lack not gifts such as avail us here,
And may reach Lambeth yet.

THE BALLAD OF THE BOOTMAKER

[A Fable for Poets]

I WENT into a bootmaker's,
A pair of boots to buy.
Upon the morrow morn those boots
Let in the rain and sky.

Then to the bootman I returned,
And cold, cold were my feet;
But my vocabulary was
Of equatorial heat.

"'Tis true," quoth he, "the boots you bought
Are palpably a pair
Not made for such ignoble ends
As vulgar use and wear.

"Rather have they been fashioned forth
By one who did disdain
The shallow art of making boots
That will keep out the rain.

"His loftier dream is to conceive
A boot that sets no bars
To the free ingress of the heavens
And visits of the stars.

"In his impassioned bootmanship
Foiled gropings are discerned
Toward some visionary boot
For which the ages yearned.

"His baffled flight, his broken wing,
His heart-cry and his pain,
Are worth a million perfect boots
That will keep out the rain."

"Your words," said I, "are passing fine,
But let my boots be made
By handicraftsmen who were not
Too great to learn their trade.

"The thirst for the Infinitudes
Will scarce with me atone
For upper leathers badly botched
And soles as badly sewn.

"I cannot rate his bootcraft high
Who principally lives
To obliterate the differences
Observed 'twixt boots and sieves.

"Not that I would on Art's free spirit
A deadening yoke impose!
Let boots express the bootmaker
And all he feels and knows.

"'Tis meet, 'tis well! But I shall yet
For evermore retain
My old, my early love of boots
That will keep out the rain."

With that I doffed the boots I loathed,
And nought besides did say,
But heaved them at the bootster's head
And bootless went my way,

To muse upon a universe
That seemed, when I was young,
A place where boots were better made,
And songs were better sung.

THE GIANTS AND THE ELVES

It is enough to make
Laughter, or tears, gush from the stone,
When, in an island where,
On meadow and copse, could break
Chaucer, that other April; where alone
Earth could conceive and bear
Shakespeare; where Milton reigned on awesome throne,
And Dryden governed from more mundane chair;
All perfect masters of their perfect tools,
And royally skilled to take
From each its utmost yield of service fair;
I am put off with posturing fools
Who in such presences cackle all day of Blake.

THE YAPPING CUR

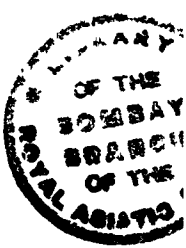
I WAS walking in the sun, my day's work done,
And the great world rolled like a wheel,
When a cur came yapping, came yap-yap-yapping,
When a cur came yapping at my heel.

Along the pleasant way where the little folk play,
Past the church, where the grown folk kneel,
The tiresome, monotonous, interminable yapping,
The yapping of the cur at my heel!

Were he hungry I would feed him at my cot
hard by,
Where are hearts that have hungred and
can feel.
He is fed as well as I am, and housed as well
as I,
And his pastime is yapping at one's
heel.

Shall I send him all asprawl from my good
stout shoe,
Turn his yapping to a yelping and a
squeal?
Nay, leave him to the thing Fate fashioned
him to do—
His dog's-work of yapping at one's heel.

For God made the arrows that around life
whirr,
And the thunders that above life peal,
And He made, too, the miserable, mangy little
cur,
And its instinct for yapping at one's heel.



THE SURPRISE

THEY thought they had left him lying well-
nigh dead,
So many javelins had been cast at him,
So many dinting blows
Upon his casque and cataphract had rung,
So many stones had with shrill whirr been
slung.
But whole of heart and limb,
At daydroop he uplifted his prone head,
Propped him upon an elbow—suddenly rose—
Woke his lulled sword and the vain scabbard
shed,
Struck out at all his foes,
And got him victory ere the day was sped.

ON A TOO PROLIFIC ESSAYIST

THE cruellest torture that a man can know,
Passing all Torquemada's racks, is said
To be the ceaseless, measured, leisured, slow
Drip-drop of water on the victim's head.

Surely it were a torment like in kind,
If in degree less maddening, to sit still
Under the leakage of this good man's mind,
The eternal trickle of this blameless quill.

STAGGERALL

" WHAT, a new Milton ? But I've seen
So many sail the æther keen,
Orbed like the haloed summer moon,
To drop like the collapsed balloon."

" Too true ! But not as these, shall fall
The incomparable Staggerall !
Counterfeits they, wound up to sing ;
He, the divine authentic thing."

" Then laud and love him—and to-day
Let him enjoy what fame he may,
But do not, 'neath to-morrow's sky,
Stone him with stones until he die."

THE ADJECTIVE

Look not too coldly or too proudly down
On this poor bondslave to a haughty Noun!
Oft in his wallet hath he carried all
His master's wealth. Oft hath this captive thrall,
Marching before his lord with herald's blast,
Won him salaams who else had noteless passed.

WHO CAN TELL?

THE Celtic Twilight? Yes,
Follow the beckon of its fairy moon!
But wherefore chide me if I love not less
The Saxon Noon?

Ah, what if Time should breathe
On both the same cold edict of decay,
And with the sole unwithering garland wreathe
The Hellenic Day?

MASTERY

WITH little learning—hardly more
Than bids me envy others' lore—
Great faith have I in laws of song,
In truths of lyric right and wrong,
As seen from the Acropolis!
As seen in times that unto this
Were what the woof of radiant air
Cephissus and Ilissus wear
Is to the marsh-bred murk unclean
That drapes the uncleaner Thames;—as seen
By those who knew how vain is mere
Delirious clutch at star and sphere,
And taught not that Intention high
Lifts Unachievement to the sky,

Or that to fail can e'er be great;
Who had scant tears for Marsyas' fate;
And wasted not their strength of wing
In desperately challenging
Battlements inaccessible
As the eyrie whence Hephaestus fell.

For the brave tourneys of the lyre
Are won by prowess, not desire,
And Art is capture, not pursuit,
Capture and conquest absolute,
Bliss of possession without bar;
And they the trophied hunters are
Who from their cloudless brows efface
The last motes of the dust of chase,
That Time may on their foreheads see
Nought of the strife save Victory.

The steeds of Helios will obey
None other than the lord of day.
They bear, delighted, the command
Of his inexorable hand;
But if a meddler take the reins,
They rear, they toss their flaming manes,
Crash backward, or break loose anon,
In boundless scorn of Phaethon.

THE DIFFERENCE

GREECE, in those feats and contests hard,
Sung by the billowy Theban bard,
Kept her fair body sound and whole,
Yet also trimmed that lamp, her soul.

No lordly Pindar now acclaims,
At Life's Nemean or Pythian games,
The strength, the swiftness, and the grace,
That win the eternal chariot-race.

We have the shouts, the applause, the throng,
But Hellas, Hellas had the song!
She loved the clash of godlike play,
But it was song that crowned the day.

THOMAS HOOD

No courtier this, and nought to courts he owed,
Fawned not on thrones, hymned not the great and callous,
Yet, in one strain, that few remember, showed
He had the password to King Oberon's palace.

And seeing a London seamstress's grey fate,
He of a human heartstring made a thread,
And stitched him such a royal robe of state
That Eastern Kings are poorlier habited.

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He saw wan Woman toil with famished eyes;
He saw her bound, and strove to sing her free.
He saw her fall'n; and wrote "The Bridge of Sighs;"
And on it crossed to immortality.

CONFIDENCE

WHEN criticasters of a day
Seem to have sneered me quite away;
When with a pontiff's frown
Some dabbler puts me down;

When up from out the nursery start
Sages to teach me mine own art—
Guides in that field my share
Ploughed long before they were;

When gusts of fashion brief as vain
Sow wide a tasteless taste inane;
When Folly, night and morn,
Scatters on me her scorn;

When they who could bestow, refuse
With deathless spite the admitted dues;
When slanderous lips aver
I am the slanderer;

Then, draining mine appointed cup,
In patience do I gird me up,
Knowing that Time, one day,
All his arrears will pay.

ON MILTON'S USE OF THE SONNET

A HUNDRED Poets bend proud necks to bear
This yoke, this bondage. He alone could don
His badges of subjection with the air
Of one who puts a King's regalia on.

A WISE PRECEPT

How oft to-day his words appear forgot,
  Who bade us, in rich tones, of far vibration,
To decorate the thing we build, but not
  Build decoration!

OVER-VIGILANCE

You shun the style that makes one blink
With its too scintillating ray?
From no such perils do I think
Your readers need be warned away.

TO A SKILLED VERSEMAKER

In rhyme you tell your tale, at mickle cost!
With better thrift, in prose, the task were done.
For what is here achieved?—A novel lost,
And not a poem won.

ON A PEOPLE'S POET

THREADBARE his songs seem now, to lettered ken :
They were worn threadbare next the hearts of men.

ON A DECEASED AUTHOR

THE smell o' th' lamp's o'er all his toil?
Yes—and such damnably bad oil.

LOVES AND HATES

I LOVE the poet of cloudless ray;
Love, too, the folded, golden vapour;
But hate the humbug who all day
Serves up deliberate fog on paper.

THE WIZARD'S WAND

SIR Bigwig Windbag, dull, diffuse, and drear,
Proses on poets from his rostrum high.
O Hippocrene, what miracle is here?
Thy very water at his touch seems dry.

TO A VINTNER OF PARNASSUS

WINE, to be worth the name, must needs have one
Of two good things—body or *bouquet*.
Either
Will help it down a willing throat to run ;
But the vast wash *you* pour as from the tun
Has neither.

COKE UPON LITTLETON

[Mr. T. W. Littleton Hay wrote to the *Saturday Review* as follows: "Many of us . . . would be glad if you would raise your powerful voice to stop William Watson."]

O wherefore squander thus
Your breath away?
Think you that Pegasus
Will stop for Hay?

II

POEMS PERSONAL AND GENERAL

THE ETERNAL SEARCH

My little maiden two years old, just able
To tower full half a head above the table,
With inquisition keen must needs explore
Whatever in my dwelling hath a door,
Whatever is behind a curtain hid,
Or lurks, a rich enigma, 'neath a lid.
So soon is the supreme desire confessed,
To probe the unknown! So soon begins the quest,
That never ends until asunder fall
The locks and bolts of the last door of all.

RAPTURE

Out of the east wind, making gray
The face of the dejected day,
I stept into a minster, where
Aisles of praise and towers of prayer,
Fencing me from all the strife
Of this illegible, blurred life,
Took and folded up and furled
The undecipherable world.

And there it seemed that I forgot
All I would fain remember not;
Folly's works by fools adored;
The senseless gun, the soulless sword.
And through the flushed and jewelled gloom

That rubied some Crusader's tomb,
There rose and rolled a golden wave,
That, thundering down the cloudy nave,
Ravishingly with violence sweet
Stormed the earth from 'neath my feet,
Swept me as a leaf abroad
In great tides of billowing laud,
Leaving me at last afar,
Derelict on an island star,
Ruthlessly and blissfully
Cast up as jetsam of the sea
That visits with all-linking flow
Each heavenly archipelago.

TO A VIOLONCELLO

WELL, O 'Cello, love I all thy mellow
Deeps of golden sound!
Tell, O 'Cello, tell me where thy fellow
May on earth be found?
Or, if such be past our finding here,
In what sphere
That brooks no galling bound,
Far beyond the light wherein thou dwellest,
What immortal, what celestial 'Cellist
Wields the bow that bids the world go round?

HER THIRD BIRTHDAY

My tiny lady, can it
  Be true that you and I,
On something called a planet,
  Are somewhere in the sky?

Yes—and at such a tearing
  And madcap speed we've spun,
That you, with dreadful daring,
  Have thrice been round the sun.

Nay, it yet more amazes,
  That my far-venturing girl
Can be as fresh as daisies
  After so wild a whirl!

And now 'neath western billow
The sun is put to bed,
And you, too, on your pillow
Must lay a golden head.

Ah, tears—they come so quickly
For grief so quickly gone!
Yet joys have rained as thickly,
For you to dream upon.

DISCLOSURE

We dwelt by western shores, and there,
  Watching a hill that watched the wave,
We called him dull in pose and air,
  A bulk not grand but merely grave—
So many mountains had we seen,
Kingly of build and port and mien.

Then came a snowstorm in the night,
  And all his ribs of rock, next morn,
All his anatomy, sprang to light,
  With form and feature, carved and worn,
That rose out of the sea's abyss
Magnificent in emphasis.

Imagine not that thou canst know
Mountains or men in very truth,
Until the tempest and the snow
Strike them at midnight without ruth,
And publish clear, in morning's gaze,
The lineaments they strove to erase.

EDENHUNGER

O THAT a nest, my mate ! were once more ours,
Where we, by vain and barren change untortured,
Could have grave friendships with wise trees and flowers,
And live the great, green life of field and orchard !

From the cold birthday of the daffodils,
Ev'n to that listening pause that is November,
O to confide in woods, confer with hills,
And then—then, to that palmland you remember,

Fly swift, where seas that brook not Winter's
rule
Are one vast violet breaking into lilies:
There where we spent our first strange wedded
Yule,
In the far, golden, fire-hearted Antilles.

THE BETTER CHOICE

THE wintry sun is a miser,
Whose joy is to hoard and hold;
But the summer sun is wiser—
He freely spends his gold.

With lavish and broad dispersal,
Around and beneath and above,
He sows his wealth universal,
And reaps universal love.

TO MY ELDEST CHILD

My little firstborn daughter sweet—
My child, yet half of alien race—
England and Ireland surely meet,
Their feuds forgotten, in thy face.

To both these lands I'd have thee give
Thy maiden heart, surrendered free;
For both alike I'd have thee live,
Since both alike do live in thee.

In thee they lay their strife aside,
That were so worn with dire unrest;
These whom the waters parted wide,
But who commingle in thy breast.

These will I teach thee to revere,
To love, and serve, and understand;
Nor chide thee if thou hold more dear
Thy mother's than thy father's land.

The English fields, in sun and rain,
Were round about thee at thy birth;
But thou shalt ache with Ireland's pain,
And thou shalt laugh with Ireland's mirth.

Thou shalt be taught her noble songs,
And thou shalt grieve whene'er is told
The story of her ancient wrongs,
The story of her sorrows old.

And often, in thy English home,
Her voice will call, and thou obey.

Thy heart will cross the sundering foam,
Thy soul to Ireland sail away.

Ah, little flower! in Irish ground
Thy roots are deeper than the sea,
Though English woodlands murmured round
The house of thy nativity.

Of both these peoples thou wert born;
Of both these lands thou art the child;
A symbol of the radiant morn
That shall behold them reconciled.

TO THE HON. STEPHEN COLERIDGE

[On his Labours in Mitigation of Animal Suffering]

SWORDSMAN of Mercy, merciless to these
Who feign that the All-Maker gladly sees
His lowlier creatures racked and riven while man
Buys with their agony a dreadful ease;

Not uncompanioned fight you this good fight:
Lords of invisible but invincible might,
The poets all are with you evermore,
Marching like morn upon the camps of Night.

They watch you 'twixt the cheers and jeers of men,
Grappling with cruelty in the dragon's den;

I say they all are with you from of old,
Partisans of that dauntless sword, your pen.

Dark are the times; Death feasts with bloody jaws;
When ruth is prone in dust, who heeds your cause?
Yet fight, and faint not; still the stars look on;
And poets acclaim, and Shakespeare leads the applause.

No wonder! For the ancient legends say—
Telling great truth in the great Grecian way—
That horsed on Pegasus was Bellerophon,
When he with joy did the Chimaera slay.

AN INSOLUBLE PROBLEM

RHONA, as yet a tiny mite
Not three years old, looked up to-night
At the resplendent heavens, and said:
"What are 'ose 'tars for?"

Little maid,
I cannot tell, I ne'er have known—
Not being God upon His throne.

ON A LITTLE GIFT TO A LITTLE CHILD

BROUGHT hither from the city of the Rood,
It speaks, to Innocence without a spot,
Of One who bade that little children should
Come unto Him and be forbidden not.

THE PRODIGY

1915

WHEN Kings reeled to their fall, or Pestilence poured
Her chalice, or wan Famine claimed her slain,
Dread comets ploughed of old the ethereal plain,
The Hirsute Star loosing his locks abhorred.
Fierce shapes he took; a bristled monster, gored
With porcine tusk the cold-bosomed Inane;
Flowed on the neck of Night, a charger's mane;
Or brandished in the zenith a hungry sword.
Now, once again, the buccaneer of Heaven,
Yonder he cruises by its northern coasts.

And there shall trail his wake of bodeful foam,
Till, from that region hunted wide, and driven
Before its fleets and all their armoured hosts,
In deeps unknown the starry Ishmael roam.

UNINHABITED

BEHOLD a sapless husk, in name a man,
That never shook with laughter at a jest,
Or flashed in anger at a hateful deed,
Or loved a woman, or sinned a headlong sin!
In two score years grown old and moribund,
His lean soul, arid as the childless sands,
Crumbles, and dustily disintegrates,
Dies piecemeal, less lamented than a tree.

It is not the well-warmed, well-peopled house
That soonest falls to wrack. 'Tis the disused
And empty dwelling, that with fireless hearth,
Pictureless walls, and shuttered window panes,
Coldly, untimely mopes into decay.

VALEDICTORY

ADIEU, gray hamlet—hall and cot,
And ivied steeple!
You would be such a pleasant spot
But for the people.

TO A SUCCESSFUL MAN

YES, titles, and emoluments, and place,
All tell the world that you have won life's race.
But then, 'twas your good fortune not to start
Handicapped with a conscience or a heart.

WHAT SCIENCE SAYS TO TRUTH

As is the mainland to the sea,
Thou art to me;
Thou standest stable, while against thy feet
I beat, I beat!

Yet from thy cliffs so sheer, so tall,
Sands crumble and fall;
And golden grains of thee my tides each day
Carry away.

THE PEER'S PROGRESS

[Verses on reading that Lord Aberdeen was about to be made Marquess of Aberdeen and Tara.]

TARA, the place of Kings, the hill of Fate—
Tara, the throne of Song, the hallowed shrine—
Tagged as a tassel to your marquessate,
Made an appurtenance of your house and line!

Who cares though you were marquess ten times o'er?
Bemarquess'd or beduked—who cares a straw?
But linked with Erin's immemorial lore,
Her memories sacrosanct, her mount of awe!

Nay, why so modest, why so humble—why
Pause, in your too meek flight, on Tara Hill ?
" Marquess of Aberdeen and Sinai "—
Consider !—were not this ev'n better still ?

God made me English—English through and through—
But, bound to Ireland by one bond supreme,
I know her soul—something unknown to you—
Her vision and her passion and her dream.

I know, as all know who have breathed her air,
How transient, how unrooted in her heart—
A mere ephemeral thing of passage there—
Were you, that in her glories claim a part.

And this last insult before gazing men—
This ignominy the bitterest yet by far—
She will remember and forgive not, when
You in Time's volume an erasure are.

You, soon enough, will be by her forgot ;
Lodged in some suburb of her thoughts were you ;
But this will as a proverb live, of what
Dull, sightless, soulless statesmanship can do.

This profanation, blind and coarse and crude,
Of things the holiest held, from sea to sea,
This is immortal as Ineptitude,
This is eternal as Stupidity.

And ev'n to this, from all the ages past,
Through all the long self-torturings, Ireland came ;
Left to her disillusions at the last,
And Tara fall'n—a pendant to your name.*

* The distinguished nobleman chose afterwards another title in lieu of the one at first contemplated.

A FAMILIAR EPISTLE

To Dr. Oliver Gogarty of Dublin

(Written in Scotland at Yuletide)

OLIVER GOGARTY me boy,
While trumpets sound and troops deploy,
Our once cool Castaly the Kaiser
Transforms into a very Geyser;
And overhung with war-cloud pluvious,
Parnassus' peaks outflame Vesuvius.
But more than peaceful is the line
I pen to you across the brine;
This somewhat overdue epistle,
Writ in the Kingdom of the Thistle,
To speed at daybreak, west by south,
From lean Loch Ryan's snarling mouth,

To Shamrock-land that gave ye birth—
The least " disthressful " land on earth.

Three Olivers before your time
Were not unknown in prose and rhyme.
One was the paladin—or pal—
Of him who fought at Roncesvalles,
And one gave Drogheda to pillage,
And one wrote " The Deserted Village " ;
But sorra an Oliver ever seen
Compares with him of Stephen's Green,
And from this frosty, fiery North
I hail you Oliver the Fourth.
How goes it yonder ? Very soon
St. Patrick's bell will toll Night's noon,
And a convivial Dublin moon
Be gazing down with bibulous leer

On Trinity's façade severe.
But ere I sleep, one wakeful word
Clamours to be no more deferred:
When, when, I pray you, shall we twain
Forgather to discourse again
Of things the world holds cheap, and we
Rate above rubies? If the sea
And sky in their most iron mood
Daunt not at all your hardihood,
What of adventuring hither, while
Throughout this blanched and shivering isle
The Heav'ns grip fast as in a vice
The Earth's hands manacled with ice,
And drop not even a frozen tear
On the cold deathbed of the Year?
Our talk shall not be all of trenches,
Falkenhayn's strategy, or French's:

Rather of matters built to abide
When the last din of war has died;
Art, Thought, and Song—the unageing themes—
And those sole verities, our dreams.

But come or not, whichever suit you,
The Muse shall cordially salute you,
For Irishman with heart more true
Ne'er claimed descent from Brian Borru,
(Which sons of Erin mostly do)—
Nor ever in the days of old,
When Malachy wore the collar of gold,
Or Ulster parried Munster's blows
While Leinster pummelled Connaught's nose,
Lived the full life of feast and fast,
And found it goodly to the last.
Thus vows, with attestation fervent,

Your faithful friend—a fellow servant
Of those nine Ladies of the Height,
Who, with large promises, invite
Their lovers to their bower above,
And make a football of our love,
Toy with the troth that never wavers,
And sell so dear their fatal favours.

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